



**Montana Fish,
Wildlife & Parks**

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ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

PART I. PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR ACTION

1. Project Title: Gallatin Sporting Clays

2. Type of Proposed Action:

- Addition of an open-side pole-style shelter
- Development of a beginners course
- Purchase and install up to 24 used clay target throwers.

3. Location Affected by Proposed Action:

The Gallatin Sporting Clays Range is located on 233 acres 4 miles northeast of Three Forks, Montana at 1300 Little Coulee Road, Three Forks, Montana 59752, S1/2 Section 12, T02N, R02E.



Figure 1. Gallatin Sporting Clays, Three Forks, Montana.



Figure 2. Proposed Project Area for Gallatin Sporting Clays

4. Agency Authority for the Proposed Action: MCA 87-1-276 through 87-1-279 (Legislative established policies and procedures for the establishment and improvement of shooting ranges) and MCA 87-2-105 (Departmental authority to expend funds to provide training in the safe handling and use of firearms and safe hunting practices). The Montana Legislature has authorized funding for the establishment of a Shooting Range Development Program providing financial assistance for the development of shooting ranges. Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) has responsibility for the administration of the program, including the necessary guidelines and procedures governing applications for funding assistance under the program.

To be eligible for grant assistance, a private shooting club or a private organization:

- (a)(i) Shall accept in its membership any person who holds or is eligible to hold a Montana hunting license and who pays club or organization membership fees;*
- (ii) May not limit the number of members;*
- (iii) may charge a membership fee not greater than the per-member share of the club's or organization's reasonable cost of provision of services, including establishment, improvement, and maintenance of shooting facilities and other membership services; and*
- (iv) shall offer members occasional guest privileges at no cost to the member or invited guest and shall make a reasonable effort to hold a public sight-in day each September, when the general public may use the shooting range for a day-use fee or at no cost; or*
- (b) Shall admit the general public for a reasonable day-use fee.*

5. Need for the Action(s):

The Gallatin Sporting Clays Range hosts the largest sporting clays event in the state each year, as well as providing three times-per-week shooting opportunities for members and non-members during the open season. For the past ten years, the facility has utilized a picnic and meeting area that has been covered with a donated aluminum frame and canvas tent cover that has provided shelter from rain and sun. This shelter has become worn out and has been scrapped. A portion of the proposed grant will provide partial funding to replace the old shelter with an open-sided, pole barn structure. The covered area will be used for instruction and safety meetings, meals, and as a resting area for shooters and staff.

Another portion of the proposed grant will be used to purchase up to 20 used clay target traps. The traps will be fully adjustable for tilt and angle and will allow the club to throw a wide variety of target presentations that are preferred by experienced and competition shooters. The traps will replace older, non-adjustable traps on the main course. The non-adjustable traps will be relocated to a new beginner course that will be located away from the main course. The beginner course will provide a variety of easy going-away and crossing targets that simulate the flight of live game birds. The beginner course will provide a safe area for instruction and practice for shooters who wish to get an introduction to gun handling, bird shooting, and clay target shooting.

The proposed funding will contribute to the long-term safety and usefulness of the facility for both experienced and beginning shooters.

6. Objectives for the Action(s):

The proposed shelter will provide a more comfortable and pleasant experience and increase overall safety for members and nonmembers, hopefully resulting in greater use of the facility. The new beginner shooting stations will provide appropriate level facilities for beginners, help prepare new shooters for bird hunting, and help promote shotgun sports in the community. The upgraded traps to be installed on the main course are more powerful and more adjustable than the existing traps and can throw targets a longer distance and over a wider range of angles. Improving the capability and reliability of traps is necessary in order to continue hosting future high-level shooting events

7. Project Size: estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected:

▪ Open-sided pole building	0.023 acres
▪ Beginner course	3.0 acres
▪ Stations with new traps:	<u>2.0 acres</u>
▪ Total:	5.023 acres

8. Affected Environment (A brief description of the affected area of the proposed project):

The 233.69-acre Gallatin Shooting Clays Range is located on land owned in fee title by Gallatin Shooting Clays. The land is not within or adjacent to any floodplain. There are no permanent surface waters or wetlands on the property. Waterways on the property comprise only intermittent seasonal runoff.

9. Description of Project:

▪ Construct an open-side pole shelter attached to the existing storage building	\$12,150
▪ Purchase 24 used, upgraded traps and associated hardware, 19 for the main course 5 for the new beginner course	<u>\$20,000</u>
▪ Total Budget for the Proposed Project	\$32,150
▪ Total FWP Funding Requested	\$16,075
▪ Funding FWP Approved	\$10,200

10. List any Other Local, State, or Federal Agency that has Overlapping or Additional Jurisdiction:

None

Permits, Licenses and/or Authorizations:

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Permit</u>	<u>Date Filed/#</u>
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N/A

Funding:

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Funding Amount</u>
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Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks	\$10,200
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11. Affiliations, Cooperating Agencies, User Groups and/or Supporting Groups:

The Gallatin Sporting Clays Range is located on 233.69 acres of exclusively private land deeded to the Gallatin Sporting Clays. This is a private range with a membership fee, though visitors are welcome and are charged \$35 per each 100 targets for the sporting clays and five-stand ranges. Gallatin Sporting Clays hosts 4 to 6 charity and training events per year. Organizations that have used the range in the past include: Sporting Clay State Championship, Manhattan 4H Club, YMCA, MSU Business Club, Ducks Unlimited, Young Life, MSU Sixth Man, American Cancer Society, and Headwaters Gundog Club.

12. History of the Planning and Scoping Process, and Any Public Involvement:

Because the Gallatin Sporting Clays Range is a private range for members, there has been no public involvement in the planning process. Proposed range improvement proposals have been discussed with the club members and the associated project vendors and contractors.

13. List of Agencies Consulted/Contacted During Preparation of the EA:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

14. Names, Address, and Phone Number of Project Sponsor:

Todd Steinmetz, P.O. Box 3483, Bozeman, MT 59773. (406) 581-4082.

15. Other Pertinent Information:

Gallatin Sporting Clays is a nonprofit private organization. The range is located between Bozeman, Butte, and Helena and serves these communities as well as smaller communities within easy driving distance of the range including Three Forks, Whitehall, Townsend, Belgrade, and Manhattan. The majority of members reside in or around Bozeman. The range offers various types of shotgun activities, including sporting clays, five-stand, FITASC, a coin-operated practice range, and pattern testing. The closest range providing similar shooting experiences is the Z Bar Z Sporting Clays in Lincoln, Montana, located approximately 145 miles from the Gallatin Sporting Clays Range.

Shooting range applications require the participating governing body to approve by resolution its submission of applications for shooting range-funding assistance. Resolution Date: April 30, 2014.

PART II. IDENTIFICATION OF THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVES

Alternative A, the **Proposed Alternative**, and **Alternative B**, the **No Action Alternative**, were considered.

- **Alternative A (Proposed Alternative)** is as described in Part I, paragraph 9 (Description of Project): to construct an open-sided pole shelter, purchase and install 24 used, upgraded traps, and develop a beginners course. There are beneficial consequences to acceptance of the **Proposed Alternative**.

- **Alternative B (No Action Alternative)** Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Shooting Range Development Grant money would be denied and the area will remain as an active shooting range without the proposed improvements. The no action alternative would have no significant negative environmental or potentially negative consequences. The range will continue on with present conditions. Land use would remain the same.

Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives (including the no action alternative) to the proposed action whenever alternatives are reasonably available and prudent to consider and a discussion of how the alternatives would be implemented: Only the proposed alternative and the no action alternative were considered. There were no other alternatives that were deemed reasonably available, nor prudent. Neither the proposed alternative nor the no action alternative would have significant negative environmental or potentially negative consequences.

Describe any Alternatives considered and eliminated from Detailed Study:

None. Only the proposed alternative and the no action alternative were considered. There was no other alternative that was deemed reasonably available, or prudent. Neither the **Proposed Alternative** nor the **No Action Alternative** would have significant negative environmental or potentially negative consequences.

List and explain proposed mitigating measures (stipulations):

None

PART III. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Abbreviated Checklist – The degree and intensity determines extent of Environmental Review. An abbreviated checklist may be used for those projects that are not complex, controversial, or are not in environmentally sensitive areas.

Table 1. Potential impact on physical environment.

Will the proposed action result in potential impacts to:	Unknown	Potentially Significant	Minor	None	Can Be Mitigated	Comments Below
1. Unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources				X		
2. Terrestrial or aquatic life and/or habitats				X		#2
3. Introduction of new species into an area				X		
4. Vegetation cover, quantity & quality				X		
5. Water quality, quantity & distribution (surface or groundwater)				X		#5
6. Existing water right or reservation				X		
7. Geology & soil quality, stability & moisture				X		
8. Air quality or objectionable odors				X		#8

Will the proposed action result in potential impacts to:	Unknown	Potentially Significant	Minor	None	Can Be Mitigated	Comments Below
9. Historical & archaeological sites				X		#9
10. Demands on environmental resources of land, water, air & energy				X		
11. Aesthetics				X		

2. & 5. There are no delineated wetlands and no natural water sources within the area proposed for development. No critical wildlife habitat would be affected. Any resident or transient wildlife may leave the immediate area during road re-surfacing activity.

8. Minor and temporary dust and vehicle emissions would be created during installation of the traps, development of the beginner course, and construction of the shelter. However, the construction time is short and human effects will be limited due to the sparse population in the surrounding area.

9. This project uses no federal funds nor does it take place on state owned or controlled property; therefore, the Federal 106 Regulations and the State Antiques Act do not apply.

Table 2. Potential impacts on human environment.

Will the proposed action result in potential impacts to:	Unknown	Potentially Significant	Minor	None	Can Be Mitigated	Comments Below
1. Social structures and cultural diversity				X		
2. Changes in existing public benefits provided by wildlife populations and/or habitat				X		
3. Local and state tax base and tax revenue				X		
4. Agricultural production				X		
5. Human health				X		#5
6. Quantity & distribution of community & personal income				X		
7. Access to & quality of recreational				X		#7

activities						
8. Locally adopted environmental plans & goals (ordinances)				X		
9. Distribution & density of population and housing				X		
10. Demands for government services				X		
11. Industrial and/or commercial activity				X		

5. The proposed installation of upgraded traps, construction of a shelter and development of a beginner course would improve the safety for members and the public using the range.

7. The proposed improvements to the Gallatin Sporting Clays range will improve the quality of the shooting sports within the community.

PART IV. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

All of the pertinent or potential impacts of the project have been reviewed, discussed, and analyzed. None of the project reviewed were complex, controversial, or located in an environmentally sensitive area. The projects being implemented are already on an existing range or altered areas that together with the insignificant environmental effects of the proposed action, indicates that this should be considered the final version of the environmental assessment. There are no significant environmental or economic impacts associated with the proposed alternative.

The Gallatin Shooting Clays Associations' Proposed Alternative, to provide a safe, regulated shooting opportunity, is supported by its members and the public. Therefore, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks should approve the Proposed Alternative (A) for the improvements as outlined in Part I, Paragraph 9.

PART V. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

Does the proposed action involve potential risks or adverse effects, which are uncertain but extremely harmful if they were to occur? No

Does the proposed action have impacts that are individually minor, but cumulatively significant or potentially significant? Individually, the proposed actions have minor impacts. However, it was determined that there are no significant or potentially significant cumulatively impacts. Cumulative impacts have been assessed considering any incremental impact of the proposed action when they are combined with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, and no significant impacts or substantially controversial issues were found. There are no extreme hazards created with this project and there are no conflicts with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan.

Recommendation and justification concerning preparation of EIS:

There are no significant environmental or economic impacts associated with the proposed alternative; therefore, an EIS is not required.

PART VI. EA CONCLUSION SECTION**Individuals or groups contributing to, or commenting on, this EA:**

- Todd Steinmetz, P.O. Box 3483, Bozeman, MT 59773. (406) 581-4082
- MT Fish Wildlife and Parks

EA prepared by:

Andrea Darling
Darling Natural Resource Consulting
Montana City, MT 59634

Date Completed:

August 21, 2014

Describe public involvement, if any:

This draft EA will be advertised on FWP's web site and through a legal ad in the *Bozeman Daily Chronicle*, *Bozeman, MT* announcing a public comment period. A press release will also announce the project and comment period.